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ABSTRACT

This paper examines preschool education in Egypt, Oman, and Japan in the light of the comparative education approach developed by George Bereday utilizing description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. The literature of early childhood education is surveyed, beginning with the three most influential pioneers: Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel, Maria Montessori, and Rudolf Steiner, and a list of 10 common principles drawn from their works are enumerated. In Egypt the number of preschools affiliated with primary schools has expanded. Governing bodies have been asked to expand preschool education in order to aid working mothers. In Oman there are no government nursery schools, but a very small number of coeducational private schools exist. In view of the increasing entry of women into the work force, governmental kindergartens may be necessary in the near future. However in Egypt and Oman, most children of kindergarten age still are looked after by parents or extended family. The assumption of the study is that preschool education level would achieve its aims and meet societal demand if the aims, admission system, curriculum, teacher training, and administration were available and well established and each of these elements is examined in relation to each of the three countries under study. Despite the cultural differences between the Arab countries and Japan, the study reveals that there are more similarities than differences concerning educational goals. The three societies always have been under the influence of traditions and moral values internally, and the influence of western educational theories externally. Both Egyptian and Japanese societies pay great attention to preschool education. These two countries stress moral education especially at this early level. In Oman because of limited resources there is no specific curricula for this age level. (DK)

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PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN EGYPT, OMAN AND JAPAN: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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"PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN EGYPT, OMAN AND JAPAN : A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Bayoumi Mohamed Dahawy*

Introduction

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26, 1984), schooling is a human right. Because, schooling not only educates children, but also aids them to explore the world around them and express themselves.(1)

In the case of Egypt, because of the national belief in education as the cornerstone in the reforms of both peoples and individuals, it has received great attention since the early years of 1952 Revolution.

The right of education is stressed by the Constitution confirming that every citizen has the right to choose the level and types of education that suit and agree with his/her talents, abilities and attitudes. This right is provided through the texts of the law without prejudice to the principle of equality of opportunities mentioned in the Constitution. Article No. 8 states that : "The State provides equal opportunities for all citizens." Article No. 40 states : "Citizens are equal before the Law. They have equal rights and duties with no discrimination on account of race, origin, language, religion and belief."(2)

Education therefore, is the individual's right according to his mental abilities. There is no room for favouritism or exceptions.

Concerning pre-school education in Egypt, there has been an expansion of the number of pre-schools affiliated with primary schools. In 1983-84, 300 new classes were established. Governorates were asked to expand pre-school education in order to aid working mothers. Further, in July 1978, the Ministry of Education started an Experimental Language School Project by establishing 12 new schools. Forty schools became available by 1981.

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English language is introduced at the pre-primary stage in spite of the limited resources of the Ministry and the shortage of trained teachers. There have been many difficulties, problems. The parents of children in the pre-primary stage in these schools have complaints![3]

In the case of Oman, there are no government nursery schools, but there is a very small number of non-government schools which are co-educational. But in view of the increasing entry of women into the work field, and the development of education, the State might find it necessary to build governmental kindergartens in the near future as the case in some Arab countries.[4]

However, in Egypt and Oman most children at the age of the kindergarten are still well looked after by their parents, family and members of the extended family.

In the case of Japan, pre-school education is an increasingly common solution to the problem of how to care for socializing, and educating children between infancy and the beginning of formal schooling. Although Japan has shifted away from family and Kin-Centred Child rearing towards institutionalized group care of young children,[5] the Japanese children are ahead of Egyptian and Omani children in many aspects of their life, such as educational, social, and moral activities, as well as their warmest acceptance of the modern technology.

It is the intention of this paper to examine the pre-school educational level in these countries, following the Scientific approach of Comparative Education, George Bereday in particular.

Educational Background: A Survey of Literature.

Examining the field of early childhood education, it is necessary to explore the work of the most influential pioneers in such a field, and to draw out the commonalties between them. They are FRIEDRICH WILHELM FOREBEL (1782-1852), MARIA MONTESSORI (1869-1952) and RUDOLF STEINER (1861-1952). All have an international reputation and influence. Each has influenced schools in different parts of the world which purport to use their approaches; each has training colleges where teachers learn about their ideas; but perhaps most importantly, all have significantly influenced mainstream education in Europe and North America.

The work of these pioneer-educators with young children and their families reveals a set of common principles which have endured and still have a useful future. The agreements between them have been fundamental in creating the early childhood tradition. To summarize, the ten common principles are as follows:

1. Childhood is seen as valid in itself, as part of life and not simply as preparation for adulthood. Thus education is seen similarly as something of the present and not just preparation and training for the future.

2. The whole child is considered to be important. His/her health, physical and mental, aspects are emphasized, as well as the importance of feelings, thinking and spiritual aspects.

3. Learning is not compartmentalized, for everything links.

4. Intrinsic motivation, resulting in child-initiated, self directed activity, is valued.

5. Self-discipline is emphasized.

6. There are specially receptive periods of learning at different stages of development.

7. What children can do (rather than what they cannot do) is the starting point in the child's education.

8. There is an inner life in the child which emerges especially under favorable conditions.

9. The people (both children and adults) with whom the child interacts are of central importance.

10. The child's education is seen as an interaction between the child and the environment in which he/she lives, in particular, other people and knowledge itself.(6)

However, in recent years, early childhood education is an art that is practiced in nursery schools, elementary schools, day-care centers, homes and other institutions. Its practitioners are known as teachers, day-care workers, Child Development Specialists, early childhood educators, etc. As a field, it serves children

ranging in age from birth to about eight years old; sometimes parents of these children are also viewed as its clients. Its purposes include education, child-care, and development.

There are a number of foundations upon which the practice of early childhood education is built. One venerated basis is the intuition of competent practitioners. The experience of these practitioners has been distilled into conceptions of what works with children, how best to organize for their education, and how best to relate and interact with them.

Early childhood education practice is also founded on ethical considerations. These relate to what program outcomes should be valued as well as to what constitutes good experiences for young children. This basis for practice is rooted in conceptions of what constitutes the good life for children and adults in our society. Since early childhood education, like education at all other levels, is preparatory in nature, judgments about activities are often made in relation to their expected outcomes.(7)

Because of that, the recommendation of the 1972 White Paper Education : A Framework for Expansion that, within the following ten years, nursery education should be provided for 50 percent of three year old children and 90% of four year old children was one of the shortest-lived visions ever to uplift the hopes of pre-school world. A climate of expansion was almost immediately followed by one of standing still, and then by one of contraction. Nevertheless, there has been since 1972 an overall increase in the number of pre-school places available, and a substantial increase in the number of children below statutory age attending primary school.(8)

Furthermore, the American experience with the Head-start pre-school scheme has indicated that children who have experienced such programmes read better, are less likely to fail in primary school, stay at school longer and are less likely to be unemployed or to be arrested in adult life. The English position is not bad - though with ample scope for improvement. Of 16,000 children born in one week in 1970 more than half were in school by the age of 4 1/2. In the 1980s, some 42% of 3 and 4 year-old children were receiving nursery education, but beyond that, many more children are experiencing some of pre-schooling in play groups. This is not, however, quite as good as the situations in France and Belgium, which have virtually complete school education for 3 and

4 year-old children, or Germany with three quarters so provided.[9]

There is evidence from another follow-up study of children who had attended normal pre-school groups,which confirms that just this. Although their sample was only 90 children, Jouett and Sylva[10], made more detailed assessments, in particular employing direct observation methods to assess the quality of play and learning activity amongst infant school children. These observations suggested that children who had attended a nursery class attached to the infant school engaged in more cognitively complex activity than a matched group of children who had been to playground. They spent more time on 3R's related activities, and they initiated more learning oriented contacts with findings of an earlier study in playgroups and nursery schools and classes, the learning environment in nursery education appears to encourage independent/purposeful problem solving and a social maturity which are well suited to the demands of school : assuming, of course, that these are accepted as desirable attributes of infant school children[11].

In short, there is considerable policy interest in any research that can show not just what can be achieved through a carefully planned pre-school experiment, but also what could be achieved in everyday pre-school settings.

Most countries, "nowadays," provide some kind of educational opportunities for children below school age. The form of such provision, its aims and objectives may differ to a greater or lesser extent from one country to another depending on its resources and the specific historical, ideological and socio-cultural forces, that underlie the educational system in general.[12]

It is, indeed, a period of reassessment of aims of pre-school education. A cross-cultural study of pre-school educational system in different social contexts might throw light on how specific historical, social or religious factors affect the way in which early childhood education system develop, and the way in which different cultures come to view the main goals and priorities of such education.

Osborn and Millbank report that in their large sample of children born in 1970, there was substantial social inequality in access to pre-school education "as many as 46% of the most disadvantaged children had received no form of pre-school education compared with

only 10% of the most advantaged group[13]. And again : "thus the children most in need of pre-school education were the ones who were most likely to have had none."[14] The type of institution attended also varied with social class and ethnic origin. They reported : "as many as 46% of Indian/Pakistani children and 35% of Afro-Caribbean children had no pre-school experience. This compared with 28% of the European (GB) children who were non-attenders."[15]

Mohamed El-Kersh recommended the expansion of establishing kindergarten sections in the colleges of education so that the B.A. degree in child education becomes the minimum level of the main competence for teaching school teachers to pursue their studies in the colleges of education. An Institute for in-service training in the field of child education must be established.[16]

Foramani Mohamed, in his evaluation of the kindergarten teacher training programme at the College of Education, Helwan University, Egypt, recommended redesigning and cancelling some courses included in the programme of the B.A. degree in kindergarten.[17]

Dahawy, in his analytical study for the imbalance of the relationship between home and school argue that there is a gap between the normative institution and the physical and mental states patterns in the educational environment in Egypt. Therefore, the study recommended that the right adoption and implication of the principle of educational opportunities in the Egyptian schools whether in urban or in rural areas. Also, the study recommended close relationship between homes and schools and reorganized the provision of pre-school education to cope with the contemporary socio-economic conditions in the Egyptian society.[18]

El-Shamsi, H.H., in his study of up-raising the pre-school child, indicated that 90% from those mothers who have children aged between 3-5 were demanding some institutions to take care of their children, and about 46% from those mothers who have children aged less than three years see that it is necessary to establish such institutions. The study also argues, that pre-school education helped children in raising their performance in the intellectual tests compared with those who did not attend this pre-school stage.[19]

The final report of the first scientific conference, organized by the College of Educational Tech-

nical in Port Said concerning pre-school education recommended that:

1. To formulate of pre-school education strategy to gradually accept all children at the appropriate age.

2. To unify the pre-school institutions under one name "The Institutions of Kindergarten."

3. To formulate a specific legislations related to this stage concerning the councelling and administration.

4. To formulate the aim of this stage as "to help children achieve the full and comprehensive development.

5. To encourage the local authorities to participate in this stage by establishing kindergarten schools, within their district.

6. To carry-out some sources and studies concerning the pre-school education, aiming at developing a suitable formula to the Egyptian socio-economic status.

7. To hold some programmes of in-service training for teachers and other personnel who are dealing with pre-school education to raise the standard of their qualifications.(20)

Over and above, there are many sources, research studies and reports might have been done in the field of pre-school education but are not available for this current study to take them into consideration due to the shortage of resources and space.

However, the study has benefited from the available studies in many areas, the identification of the study problem in particular.

The Study Problem, Assumption and Questions:

In accordance with the recommendations of the previously mentioned sources and studies, and the the purposes of pre-school education such as : Providing a transition experience between the early years of home and the formal school experience; giving a child a lasting educational advantage or a head start; enriching the

social life of a child who has limited access to age-mates; helping to deal with minor educational handicaps; and providing parents with some relief from the responsibility of caring for a child for a few hours a week or considerably more.(21) As well as the Egyptian educational laws controlling the aspects of pre-school education stage.(22) This current study would like to argue that, there are still some shortage and difficulties are facing this stage and prevent the achievement of its aims in Egypt and some of other Arab countries.

The study assumption concerning that is:

Pre-school education level would achieve its aims and meet the demands of the society, if the following aspects became available and well established:

a) The aims of pre-school education level; b) The Admission System; c) The Curriculum and Educational Programmes; d) The Preparation of teachers; and e) The suitable type of educational administration.

This assumption might be put into the form of questions:

1. What are the aims of pre-school education in Egypt, Oman, and Japan?

2. What are the admission regulations of this stage in Egypt, Oman, and Japan?

3. What kind of curricula and educational programmes at the pre-school education stage in Egypt, Oman, and Japan?

4. How is the system of teacher preparation working for this stage in Egypt, Oman, and Japan?

5. What is the type of educational administration implemented in the level of pre-school education in Egypt, Oman, and Japan?

To investigate this assumption and answer these questions, this study would like to follow one of the comparative methodological approaches, George Bereday's in particular.

The Methodological Approach: (George Bereday)

George Bereday, was born in 1920 and fought with

Polish forces based in Britain during the Second World War. He has a distinguished academic record, having studied at Oxford and taken his Doctorate of Philosophy at Harvard. Professor of Comparative Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, he has visited and taught at the Universities of Moscow and Tokyo. He has edited many publications, including Comparative Education Review and the Year Book of Education, and contributed to a number of books. His book, Comparative Method in Education, set forth his beliefs about the purposes comparative education should seek to achieve the methods it should follow.(23)

It is important to note Bereday's views about the purpose of comparative education as "The Analytical Survey of Foreign Educational System." Bereday sees the study of comparative education existing because of "the need to explore systematically the quality of foreign schools as a means of evaluating one's own educational system."

If comparative education "seeks to make sense out of the similarities and differences among educational systems," Bereday believes this can only be accomplished properly by reliance on many fields of study, such as sociology, history, economics, politics and so on.(24)

The Bereday's approach of comparative education may be divided into two parts : (a) area studies, and (b) comparative studies proper, covering more than a single country or region. Bereday believes that area studies constitute indispensable preliminary requirements for the work of real comparative analysis. The important point is that area studies require description. Now description in an area study may well be confined to a single country, but when two or more countries are being compared as to their educational provisions, description is the first stage in this, too. For comparative work proper, Bereday sees description of more than one educational system as the first step. This description is concerned, initially, with "pedagogical" (i.e. educational data only).

What is involved in Description? Description begins with extensive reading. As with many another study the sources read maybe primary, secondary, or auxiliary ones. Bereday refers to such primary sources as eye-witness accounts, reports, transcripts of proceedings, and written material of many kinds produced in the area being studied and which can be regarded as authentic and first-hand. The next means of securing data for the

description of an educational system or systems is by visits to the schools and other educational institutions themselves.

This is comparatively simple, it would seem, given the funds for travel, nevertheless, there are many pitfalls. One ought to see not merely those schools the authorities want one to see; those visited should be comprehensive examples, and visits should be made to each type of school. Visits should not be rushed, and there is need for many other precautions. The third steps involved in description is to record what one has seen and there are many methods which may be employed, such as maps, diagrams, graphs, statistical tables, presentation of facts in tabular form, and so on. To do this properly, prior decision about analytical categories is most useful, but of course this skill comes only with experience. Finally, description through these means leads almost concurrently to the establishment of certain hypotheses or tentative generalizations.(25)

The second step is that of INTERPRETATION. By this Bereday means the evaluation of pedagogical data of the country or countries being studied in terms of their historical, political, economic, social, geographical, philosophical, and other backgrounds. Because sheer description is not comparative education, and because description leads the inquiring mind to jump perhaps to conclusions, it is necessary to recall that an educational system does not exist in vacuo and that one should call upon other disciplinary areas to assist in explaining why an educational system is as it is. Interpretation in this manner exposes school data to "a test of social relevance." He goes on to state that, by "exposing the date to a rosette of different disciplines," one can evaluate, not only educational data, but also their causes and connections. Finding the why of it, he maintains, rather than the how allows the researcher to start on the road of direct comparison.(26)

These two stages of description and interpretation are the stages of area study. When two or more area studies are to be used for comparison purposes, Bereday adds two more stages to his model. Together the four comprise the whole process of comparison.

The third step is that of JUXTAPOSITION. The aim of this is to establish similarities and differences in the date gathered so far. To do this, it is necessary to establish "criteria of comparability," then examine the data in juxtaposition, thus leading to the formulation of

an "hypothesis for comparative analysis." However, juxtaposition he feels is no more than a preliminary matching of data secured from the first two stages in order to prepare the way for comparison. It is, he says, important to use juxtaposition to systematize data by grouping into the same or comparable categories. He suggests that it is useful to employ tabular and textual juxtaposition.

As the task of juxtaposition is really designed to allow the formulation of an hypothesis for comparison, Bereday is prepared to use the term "preliminary comparison" in place of juxtaposition.(27)

The logical fourth and final step of comparative analysis is comparison proper. This, according to Bereday's scheme, takes the hypothesis formulated as a result of the process of juxtaposition and simultaneously regards the data for two, or for several countries with a view to arriving at an objective, consistent conclusion, that is some proof that the hypothesis established is tenable. The process is one of "symmetric shuttling back and forth between the areas under study."(28) This matching or balancing involves a systematic crossing of national frontiers again and again. When balanced comparison is not possible, one has to resort to illustrative comparison. Here no generalizations or laws can be formulated, it is inferior method.(29) Bereday states, that the bridge between area and comparative studies is very hard to cross. This scheme, while logical, seems to have some difficulties with regard to implementation in practice. Bereday believes that the easier form of comparative analysis comprises the problem approach, rather than total analysis which "deals with the immanent general forces upon which all systems are built."(30)

In the following pages, the study tries to examine and answer its assumption and questions in accordance with George Bereday's approach. The first two steps of Bereday's approach will be dealt within the following part.

First: Pre-school Education in the Arab Republic of Egypt

Education is a critical force in contemporary Egyptian development. Egyptian education is the past and present architect of economic and social behavior in the Middle East and throughout the Muslim world. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar University has been the Centre of Islamic scholarship, education, and thought. Muslims educated at al-Azhar have extended Egypt's influence for

beyond its borders. And early in the 19th century, Egypt took the lead of the rest of the other Muslim countries in secular education especially within the period when Mohamed Ali set up the first modern medical, veterinary, engineering, and accounting schools in the area. During British colonial rule of Egypt, state-controlled education was structured to serve British interests while Egyptians and non-English foreigners worked to expand private and religious education.

Following Britain's declaration of Egyptian independence in 1922, great advances took place in public education at all levels. Egypt's educational leadership expanded even more during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who offered free of charge secular and religious education, not only for Egyptians but also for students from other other Muslim countries. While accepting non-Egyptian students, Egypt sent its teachers and administrators overseas to the rest of the Arab world. They set up and staffed schools and universities on so large a scale that Egyptians can claim to have shaped the secular and religious leadership of most of the Arab countries.(31)

Today Egypt's educational system both reflects and augments the socio-economic status of its own people. Historic conflicts between religious and secular leaders, between tradition and innovation, and between foreign and national interests, influence contemporary Egyptian education.

However, history has set in motion two separate educational movements, the "open door" foreign investment in educational projects and programmes and the Egyptian populist, reorganization of education. For the most part, the foreign movement directed itself toward the elite while the Egyptian reorganization directed itself toward the masses. The goals of Egyptian populist reform were clearly delineated in 1979 when the Ministry of Education prepared a "Working Paper of Development and Innovations of Egyptian Education." This paper was submitted for review to all popular and political bodies, trade unions, universities, local authorities, cultural and economic experts, and everyone concerned with education and its reform.(32)

The Ministry of Education then reviewed reports from all groups and integrated them into a comprehensive report entitled "Developing and Innovating Education in Egypt : Policy, Plans and Implementation Programmes." The concept about reform represented a comprehensive

national action, the basic principles of which were sanctioned by the National Democratic Party Congress, approved by the Ministerial Committee on Services and by the Executive Cabinet in November 1980. The implementation began in 1981 to continue for five years as a joint responsibility of educational and governmental systems. In other words, the populist movement had the sanction of all power centres in the government and in the socialistic private sector.

In 1981, the legislature passed Law 139, Comprehensive Educational Legislation. The priorities of the reorganization plan which are supported by legislation have made significant progress without substantial foreign investment.

The expansion of pre-school child education was one of these principles which were determined to direct the process of educational development for depending the roots of democracy, for comprehensive development and productive work in the contest of cultural identity, and for a lifelong process.

The ultimate goal of this project is to provide increasing educational opportunities for pre-school children. Implementation of these programmes was scheduled to start at the school-year 1980-81. The basis for the expansion and the specifications of location, buildings, capacity, utilities, equipment and sanitary requirements, school system, curricula, plans admission prerequisites, staffing for supervision and teaching as well as school fees are legislated in Law 139 of 1981, Article 8. All responsibility and power for the establishment of new pre-school is rested in the Ministry of Education.(33)

In reality, parents have recently shown increasing interest in sending their children to nurseries and kindergartens. Therefore, Ministry of Education (ME) provides educational chances for pre-school children and supplies a distinguished educational service. This is done in cooperation with organizations authorities, institutions and concerned ministries, and (ME), organizes supervision and guidance to this type of schools.

Following the above introductory description of the Egyptian movement and efforts towards the pre-school education, it would be useful now to examine the study assumption and to answer its questions.

The first question is concerning the aims of pre-school education.

Q. No. I. What are the aims of Pre-school Education in Egypt?

The Ministry of Education has set up a Higher Council for Childhood which is responsible for supervising that type of type of education level and for coordinating with other concerned authorities. The specific objective is to provide psychological, mental and health care for pre-school children at this important stage of their life.(34)

Moreover, the Ministerial Decree No. 150 of 198 concerning pre-school education identified the aims of this level as follows : Article No. 3.

The pre-school institutions are aimed to help children achieve the educational goals through:

a) Comprehensive development for each child, mentally, physically, socially, morally, & emotionally, taking into account the individual differences between them.

b) To develop the children's language skills, numerical and technical abilities, socially as well as individually, with special emphasis on the creativity and imagination.

c) To raise children in a better environment in accordance with the society values and norms.

d) To meet their age requirements and to help children develop good personalities.

e) To help children gradually accept formal school life and discipline.(35)

Q. No. II. What are the Admission Regulations of this Stage in Egypt?

Article No. 11 from the Ministerial Decree No. 150 of 1989 indicates that : Children's admission age is between 4 to 6 years of age. The admission regulations stress the age itself for accepting a child. Therefore, older children have the priorities for acceptance. No child less than four years of age is allowed in the state schools or classes of pre-school. But, private sector is allowed to accept children less than four years of age

but not less than three years and nine months, under conditions such as class size not exceeding 45 children. Article No. 12 in the same Decree mentioned that the regulation of the pre-school admission is to follow what have been declared by the Ministerial Decree and its articles concerning the pre-school education.(36)

Q. No. III What Kind of Curricula and Educational Programmes are Being Used at the Pre-school Stage in Egypt?

The Ministry of Education organized a Consultative Committee according to the Ministerial Decree No. 58 of 1988. This Committee concerned with suggesting, designing and developing curricula for kindergartens that cater for sound, and integrated upbringing and preparing children for basic education.(37) Moreover, the Ministerial Decree No. 150 of 1989 mentioned that : Article No. 6 concerned with the school and class organization and activities. No periods in the pre-school day, but full-day, full of different sorts of activities, comprehensive skills and experiences to help children in developing the spiritual, moral, physical, social and emotional domains. The school day might be handled with more flexibility as for what to be presented to the child at a certain time. Article No. 7 strongly mentioned not to ask children for homework or outside duties.

Article No. 8 concerning the responsibility of the MInistry of Education to organize a special committee, which is specialized in pre-school education to prepare the textbooks of activities as well as the teachers' manuals. The Ministry of Education has to distribute these textbooks to all the pre-school institutions. Article No. 9 indicated that using any other textbooks as an additional one is forbidden at this level of education.(38)

Q. No. IV. How is the System of Teacher Education Working in Egypt?

There was an expansion in opening sections for preparing nursery teachers within the colleges of education, in addition to the Childhood Department at the Girls College, Ain Shams University in Cairo. These new sections aiming at preparing cadres needed for nursery schools. Cadres with certain specifications, able to deal with children at this early age, and to develop their educational abilities. New colleges and departments for preparing B.A. and M.A. degrees

specialized in kindergarten level will be opened in the following year.(39) Furthermore, the Ministerial Decree No. 150 and its articles identified that:

> Article No. 5 mentioned that each class of pre-school level would have two teachers and a helper, in addition to the music teacher.
>
> Article No. 18 indicated that, pre-school teachers must be university graduates and specialized in child-development in particular. In case of lack of properly qualified teachers the Ministry might accept other university graduates from the college after giving them an extra year to get a Special Diploma in Childhood Education.
>
> Article No. 17 mentioned that, the headmasters of kindergarten must hold a higher degree of Childhood Education plus five years experience, of preferably a higher degree such as M.A. or Ph.D. in this field.
>
> Article No. 19 stresses the in-service training for all teachers and personnel working in the pre-school institutions to attend these training programmes annually for one week period. The training programmes should include the theoretical 1/3 and practical 2/3 aspects.
>
> Article No. 20 mentioned that, gradually, the well-qualified teachers should replace the unqualified ones in the pre-school institutions.(40)

Q. No. V. What is the Type of Educational Administration Implementing in the Level of Pre-school Educational Institutions?

There was an expansion in opening nurseries affiliated to Experimental Language Schools that began in 1985, in addition to encouraging the private sector to open more nurseries under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Also, organizing kindergarten affiliated to formal schools according to the Ministerial Decree No. 154 of 1988. The Decree defines the objectives and plans of these schools, admission regulations, personnel qualifications, expenditure and supervision rules.(41)

The Ministerial Decree No. 150, and its articles indicated that:

Article No. 13 mentioned all pre-school institutions whether run by state or private sectors must be under the control and supervision of the Ministry of Education, educationally, technically, and administratively.

Article No. 16 mentioned the following conditions must be obtained when a new pre-school would open:

a) Schools which might include pre-school classes should implement a full-day study and not a shifting system.

b) More rooms or classrooms should be available, without causing any difficulties or shortages for the main school purposes.

c) School buildings should be in a good condition and including all services.

d) Classrooms for pre-school children should be in the ground floor, and in a very healthy environment.(42)

These broad ideas about pre-school education in Egypt will be compared with its counterparts in Oman and Japan.

However, it would be a good idea to examine the study assumption and to answer its questions concerning the Omani situations.

The Pre-school Education in Sultanate of Oman

Oman is the second largest state in the Arabian peninsula after Saudi Arabia, and looks over three seas : The Arab Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Arab Sea. It includes varied patterns of land forms with its level plateau representing 3% of its global area and its desert and rugged land occupying the rest of the land. Administratively, it is divided into 59 states that are ruled by a government representative or "Wali."(43)

In Oman every effort is made for a steady, controlled movement forward. People are not manipulated like pieces or made to fit into a political pattern that changes from time to time. The aim is stability over the years, with a respect for historic Arab values and traditions.

There has been recent talk in the Gulf region about forms of democracy similar or not unlike Western democracy. Oman whilst being conscious of its own national needs and respectful of the traditions of others, believes that you cannot achieve democracy merely by setting up ballot boxes.

There must be education, for example, which lays the foundation for informed, intelligent political judgement. There must be an allowance for differing attitudes which can change from place to place and from time to time.(44)

The general educational policy in Oman endeavours to fulfill the expectations and future aspirations of the Omani society for a free and decent life, which stems from the society's awareness and cultural responsibilities, its Islamic Arabic affiliation, the fulfillment of its international and humanitarian obligations and its awareness of realities of the age and the changes of life. The objective of education and instruction is to create an Omani generation that is faithful and capable of bearing its responsibility in the national and patriotic structure, on the one hand, and of keeping in step with the progressive change in contemporary life, on the other, and that education and instruction are the primary instruments for the creation of this generation.

However, education in Sultanate of Oman stands on general fundamental principles which orientate the educational policy of the land. The most important of these principles are:

a) Education is the right of all citizens and is provided and supervised by the state.

b) Education is the society's instrument to eradicate all signs of backwardness in the local environment and to develop it.

c) Education and instruction are the means that enable the individual to practice his personal and public rights and perform the duties required from him.

d) Guarantee of democracy of educational opportunities for all citizens.

e) The realization of the function of education and learning and its production.

f) The realization of the complementation and co-ordination between the official and unofficial efforts of the various institutions of education and instruction.

g) Awareness of the international role of the Sultanate and the Arab nation and their contribution to the promotion of international peace and human civilization.

h) Awareness of the unity of human civilization.(45)

However, public education in Oman extends over twelve years divided into three stages : the primary stage which lasts six years, the intermediate stage which lasts three years and the secondary stage which lasts three years of study. In this order, it resembles the most common educational systems in the other countries.

In Oman there are no government nursery schools, but there is a small number of non-government schools which are co-educational. But in accordance with the social mobility and the increasing entry of women into work fields and the development of education, the state night find it necessary to build government kindergarten schools in the coming years. However, education in the first grade is not compulsory, but it is free of charge in all its stages, and like other Gulf States, the Sultanate presents free textbooks and copy books to all pupils, provides free transport for both teachers and pupils, offers free boarding accommodation to non-local students and pay monthly grants to students attending technical institutions to encourage them to pursue this kind of education.(46)

Following the previous introductory description of the Omani education in general and pre-school education in particular, the study would like to answer the following questions:

Q. No. I: What are the Aims of Pre-school Education in Oman?

As has been mentioned previously, there is no government pre-school education, therefore, there are general aims of education to cope with at all levels, which are: To create an Omani generation that is faithful and capable of taking its responsibility in the national and patriotic structure on the one hand, and of keeping in step with the progressive change in contemporary life, on the other, and that education and

instruction are the primary instruments for the creation of this generation.

The general aims of education have been stated to deliberately emphasize the following:

a) Education is a right for all members of the Omani society. The government considers itself responsible, with all the possibilities and educational institutions, at its disposal, to meet each individual's need for education without limitations.

b) Each individual's abilities are to be developed, unrestricted by time or place, in order that each may learn and pursue educational progress all through life. Each should be enabled to satisfy his/her needs for a uniform education covering all aspects of his/her personality and making him/her capable of changing everything around him.

c) The necessary manpower for all sectors is to be provided, for the sake of promoting the country's development plans and projects and for providing those facilities and ancillary aids for specialized and higher education as may be consistent with Oman's development requirements.

d) The Omani individual is to be enlightened about his rights, duties and obligations towards his own country and his larger Arab Motherland, leading to his comprehension that unity and collaboration among the Arab people are sources of power for him; and

e) The student's ability to make use of his leisure time in useful and beneficial pursuits is to be encouraged, by means of creating suitable activities aimed at insuring the welfare and progress of both the individual and the society in which he lives.(47)

Consciously applying these aims, Oman's educational leadership has achieved steady progress in state-wide education and individual development. All parts of the Sultanate, are involved.

Q. No. II: What are the Admission Regulations of this Stage in Oman?

According to the available resources,(48)

there are no specific regulations for admission at pre-school education in Oman. Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for his level of education, according to the Decree No. 43 of 1984, which identified the whole set of regulations and organization of this level. The private sector implemented such regulations. There are 17 pre-school education institutions in Oman, most of them are situated in Muscat.(49) The Ministry of Education still plays a vital role in controlling the pre-school education level through the supervision councelling.

Q. No. III: What Kind of Curricula and Educational Programmes of the Pre-school Education level in Oman?

In spite of the vital role played by the Ministry of Education in controlling pre-school education in Oman through supervision and councelling; there is no specific curricula or textbooks prepared specially for this stage. To overcome this shortage, the Ministry of Social Affairs asked the private sectors that run such institutions to provide suitable activities such as arts, music, games which suit the children's abilities.(50)

Q. No. IV: How is the System of Teacher Education Working in Oman?

The teacher is without doubt one of the most important factors influencing educational efficiency. The teacher's role in producing quantitative, qualitative, and cost-effective efficiency in education is obvious. Some of the other critical variables are the teacher's qualifications, previous development and training, classroom skills, concepts, work environment in the school, salary or standard of living, and social status.(51)

Concerning the pre-school teachers in Oman, and in accordance to the available resources, there are no specific institutions to prepare pre-school teachers. Therefore, the Ministry of Social Affairs organized two training programmes in Muscat and Salalah to quality some of general secondary school leavers to be pre-school caretakers. There are about 17 institutions with 78 helpers and caretakers, all of them are female.(52)

Q. No. V: What is the Type of Educational Administration Implemented in the Level of Pre-school Educational Institutions in Oman?

School administration, along with its supportive

body, the Educational Directorate, are considered to be major, decisive factors in determining educational efficiency. Material and human resources can be mobilized, organized, stimulated and directed through administrators, towards the realization of the aims of the school when they are functioning optimally.(53) Therefore, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the control and supervision of all stages of education. It also supervises governmental and private education in the Sultanate. There are other institutions and schools which follow authorities other than the Ministry of Education such as the Ministry of Palace Office Affairs and the Vocational Centres and Institutes which follow the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the schools of the Ministry of Defense and Police and the Ministry of Health, the Public Authority of Communication and the Central Bank. There are also private schools with all their national and other foreign communities.(54)

The pre-school education level administratively controlled by the authorities of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which provide some of services required by childhood age, and the other services provided through the private sectors.

This idea about pre-school education in Oman will be compared with its counterparts Egypt and Japan.

The study will examine the answer to the questions which have been raised previously.

Pre-school Education in Japan

Attempting to enhance understanding of an educational system by comparing it with another is not a new idea. For two decades following the launching of Sputnik, comparisons of the U.S. system were often made with the Soviet Union. Then, with the advent of the first International Educational Achievement Science Survey, the growing competence of Japanese students made the Japanese system of education an obvious basis for comparison. During the 1980s there has been a continuous series of reports focusing on the points of strength of the Japanese system of schooling.(55)

However, Japanese attitudes toward the legitimacy of the school as a social institution, and the relationship of these attitudes toward social class, are

best revealed through a brief historical description of the growth of schooling.

In Japan the earliest schools were founded in the 1600s to educate the country's elite what is required and suggested by the government. During the Meiji era (1868-1912), the government attempted to expand education system beyond the elite classes. However, compared to the growth of schools in the United States, few Japanese youth entered school. In 1895, only 5.1% of 15-year old Japanese males and 1.3% of females were enrolled in middle school. In the United States 35% of males and 33% of females aged 15019 were enrolled in secondary school by 1895. As late as 1940, only 60.5% of Japanese youth were enrolled in primary school as compared to 91.1% in United States.

After World War Two, Americans encouraged the Japanese to build high schools that reflected the diverse composition of the community. This conflicted with the Japanese tradition of secondary education as an elite institution to select and train upper-class youth for future employment in government service. Currently, while virtually all Japanese children attend high school, a salient function of schooling is to select those who may attend college, a group that is assured of secure employment in private industry or government. Approximately 58% of Japanese students completing high school apply to junior college of university; only one applicant in four is admitted from the larger applicant pool of high school seniors and recent graduates who have failed to gain admission following earlier attempts. In the United States approximately 42% of high school graduates enter college or university.(56)

In Japan it was recognized from the beginning that a developing industrialized nation needed not only an enlightened and educated work-force, but one which possessed a national consciousness free from social barriers. As Dore, R. P. observed, "perhaps the single most important factor which transformed Japan in the space of half a century from a society of hereditary 'estates' with clearly institutionalized boundaries to a society in which few people knew or cared to what estate his neighbours' ancestors had belonged, was the decision embodied in the decree of 1872 to establish a universal compulsory system of elementary education for all.(57)

Thus, compulsory education was extended to the 9th grade, which meant that six years at elementary school were to be followed by three years at junior high school.

The school-learning age was fixed at 15 with the possibility of attending senior high school thereafter. In the event, the high economic growth of the 1960s led to an almost universal desire for a full secondary education and since 1975 around 95% of Japanese young people have stayed in full-time education until the age of 18.

Today compulsory education in Japan is almost entirely single-tracked until the age of 15 because 99% of young people are enrolled in comprehensive and co-educational schools which provide a public education that is delivered with remarkable uniformity.(58)

In Japan, pre-school is an increasingly common solution to the problem of how to care for, socialize, and educate children between infancy and the start of formal schooling. Approximately 95% of the fourth-year old children in Tokyo are enrolled in nursery schools, day-care centres, or group-care homes.(59) Many Japanese teachers and administrators argue that, pre-schools have an increasingly important role to play in helping children grow up in a country they view as rapidly changing. Demographic and cultural changes in post-war Japan have led to profound changes in the Japanese family, and these changes are reflected in the way Japanese think about their pre-schools and, specifically, in how they think about class size and teacher/student ratios. However, the Japanese pre-schools' typical ratios of 30 students per teacher and per class for 4-and 5-year old children. Although Japan is a wealthy country, a country that gives great importance to education, the Japanese Ministry of Education has set a limit of 40 children per class for Yochien, which are comparable to U.S. nursery schools for 3-and 4-year old children and to U.S. kindergartens for 5-year old children. Why do Japanese choose to operate their pre-schools with such large class sizes and such large student/teacher ratios?

American studies of Japanese pre-schools have begun to examine the techniques of classroom management. Japanese teachers have to keep their classes of 30 or more children in line and learning. Japanese pre-school teachers interact with the class as a whole rather than with individual students, thereby minimizing competition among the children for the teacher's energy, time, and attention.(60)

Following the above introductory description of the Japanese education in general and pre-school education in particular. The study will go on to answer the main questions.

Q. No. I: What are the Aims of Pre-school Education in Japan?

The aims of Japanese education were to ensure the all-round-intellectual, moral and aesthetic-development of individuals. The contexts were first loyalty to elders in the immediate family and then to the state represented by a divine father figure, the Emperor. Faith obedience to the constitution and commitment to the prosperity of the nation were qualities designed to promote the welfare of the Japanese society. Fundamental Law of Education (Law No. 25 of 1947, stated the aim of education in the new Japan in Article I) as follows:

"Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labour and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the independent spirit, as builders of the peaceful state and society."(61)

The principle of equal opportunity in education was also stated. Article No. 3 reads: The people shall be given equal opportunities of receiving education according to their ability, and they shall not be subject to educational discrimination on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin.(62)

Criteria on which previous inequalities of treatment in Japan had been legitimated - sex, social status and family origin - were rejected in the article, which clearly reflected American concepts of equality. This article left open the question of inequalities in individual learning abilities, thus making it possible for traditional attitudes to prevail in the organization of schools and the promotion of pupils through the system. These attitudes probably allow, for instance, competition among pupils at all levels in a mass system of education.

Despite, there are no specific aims for pre-school education in Japan due to the shortage of resources, it can be claimed that Japanese pre-schools strive to produce children who are obedient, energetic, persevering, gentle, and group-oriented with a dash of self-confidence and individuality.(63)

Q. No. II: What are the Admission Regulations of this Stage in Japan?

Since education and qualifications, rather than patronage are the keys to political and economic success, parents, and particularly mothers, are willing to sacrifice a great deal to give their children a good education. At a very early age children are coached at home so that they may enter a 'good' nursery school.

Therefore, since 1970s, pre-schools have come to play an increasingly significant role in the socialization and emotional and cognitive development of Japanese children. But Japanese mothers by and large, do not feel threatened by the growing role of pre-schools in their children's development because the duties the pre-schools have come to take over are those traditionally performed less by mothers than by extended family and community.(64)

However, pre-school education institutions in Japan accept 3-year old children to 5-year old children. In 1985, there were about 41.2% state pre-school institutes and about 58.5% private sector ones, in addition to about 0.3% nurseries institutions for those infant children. These infant nurseries accept infants as early as one week after their birth.(65)

Based on Froebel's theories of kindergarten education, the first Yochien taught children of the upper and middle classes the cognitive skills, that they would need to succeed in primary school. During the first half of the 20th century, the number of Yochien grew steadily, especially in urban, white-collar areas. Since the more the number has risen dramatically, from approximately 2000 in 1940 to 6000 in 1960 to 14000 in 1976, and the percentage of Japanese pre-school-aged children attending Yochien has gone from only 7% in 1948 to 44% in 1965 and 66% in 1977.

Q. No. III: What Kind of Curricula and Educational Programmes are Being Used at Pre-school Education Stage in Japan?

The ebb and flow of curriculum debate in Japan since 1945 has followed a similar pattern to conflicts over administration. Some members of the Supreme Command Allied Powers (SCAP) thought that curriculum reform was vital to the democratization of the country. In particular they pointed at the position and content of moral education (Shushin) - a weekly subject in the

curriculum of every school - which through traditional stories and examples was intended to promote loyalty to Emperor and nation.

On the whole curricula are laid down by the Ministry of Education. They are based on respect for independent initiatives made by schools and recognition of the differing abilities and aptitude of individual students. The curriculum in an individual school must comply with ministry standards.

It is possible, within the principles of curriculum determination, to describe the content of education at each level of schooling. Lower down the system less choice is available. So in kindergartens the prescribed content of education includes health, social life, nature, language, music and rhythm and art and craft in classes which last 4 hours a day for 220 days of the year.(67)

However, Japanese parents feel that there are many crucial pre-primary school skills they cannot easily teach their children at home, including how to play, share, and deal with other children, how to be a member of a group. But most parents feel they can teach reading at home. Therefore, the Japanese pre-school stage facilitates the child's transition from the dyadic world of home to the more complex world of school and society by offering a programme carefully structured to limit face-to-face, emotionally intense interactions between children and teachers, unlike mother at home.(68)

Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Japan identifies the minimum length of the school-year for the 4 levels (kindergarten, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school levels). Also, it identifies the curricula content and textbook and the limited time for each subject matter and its aims and activities for each level.(69)

Q. No. IV. How is the System of Teacher Education Working in Japan?

The status of a teacher has always been high in Japan. Sensei (Teacher) is still a greatly respect term but in real economic and social terms the position of teachers has changed considerably in the past hundred years. Between 1878 and 1887 some 80% of the students attending teacher training schools came from Samurai families. By the end of the Meiji period in 1912 and thereafter the majority of students in Normal schools was

from non-Samuria families.[70] In the 1930s these potential teachers, who strongly supported the ultra-nationalist, claimed that teaching was a holy profession. Teachers were indoctrinated with nationalistic and semi-religious beliefs and as students in Normal schools participated in military exercises as part of their training. A series of economic depressions made teaching in the 1930s an occupation which offered security and provided teachers who were loyal to the Emperor and state.

However, training teachers for all types of school has been unified, the period of training increased and the provision of in-service education expanded. Certification requirements vary with school level. For example, teachers receive a certificate to teach all subjects in elementary schools but are authorized to teach specific subjects in the lower and upper secondary schools. Regular certificates are either first-or second-class. Holders of the latter can teach only as assistants and the legal economic differences between the two classes are great. Temporary certificates, for example, are for three years; regular certificates are for a lifetime.

The pattern of courses available to the would be teachers are rather similar to those in the U.S.A. First-class certificates for kindergarten, elementary and lower secondary school-teachers and temporary certificates for upper secondary school-teachers are granted to university graduates who ahve completed a university bachelor's degree in which a prescribed number of credits in teaching subjects and professional subjects has been obtained. The number of subject-credits is high for upper and lower secondary school-teachers' certificates - amounting to nearly 90% of the course. For elementary and kindergarten teachers the balance is different - more than 30% of the credit must be for teaching subjects, the rest in professional subjects.[71]

Q. No. V: What is the Type of Educational Administration being Impelemented at the Level of Pre-school Education Institutions In Japan?

The administration of Japanese education is similar to that of France in many respects. The past-1968 Meiji government wished to unify both the nation, choosing national Shintoism as an appropriate ideology, and the education system as central to the achievement of this aim. It chose as its administrative model the centralized educational system of France. In the Educational Code of 1872 is found a systematic body of laws

regulating all details of organization, finance and administration. Probably the most important feature of the code was the power given, at least by implication, to the National Department of Education, later the Ministry of Education. In one category of business the Ministry had the power to establish systems of education, draw up regulations, raise taxes for the schools and distribute grants to local districts.

An Imperial Ordinance of 1891 gave the Minister of State for Education power to licence, appoint, promote, dismiss and pension school officials. It also regulated the production, supply and context of textbook and school-teachers. Nevertheless, in a highly structured national system ofeducation, a great deal of power was placed in the hands of members of the bureaux or directorates in the Ministry. The number of functions of these bureaux changed over the period in which the Meiji Constitutions of the Empire of Japan was in force, namely from 1889 until a new Constitution was promulgated in 1946 and made effective in 1947. In 1952, the Ministry was given responsibility for educational matters but could not compel boards of education to obey ministerial wishes. Next it was proposed that school board members should not be elected but appointed and boards should be required to obey the directives of the Ministry. The School Board Act was passed in 1956.

Nowadays on behalf of the people the administration of education is shared between the national government and local government at perfectural and municipal levels. The Ministry of Education's tasks are to integrate the administrative services at the national level, to promote education at all levels and to manage some national educational institutions. The Ministry advises and supervises local authorities and reserves the right to require regular reports, to conduct inquiries and where necessary to insist on changes.(72)

Within the Ministry there are a number of directorates which deal with define daspects of education. During the occupation the Ministry was reorganized many times. In 1978 it comprised the following bureaux, departments or directorates:

a) The Minister's Secretariat is responsible for personnel, general affairs, the budget, planning and research and statistics.

b) The Higher Education Bureau looks after planning, university, technical, medical and teacher education and student affairs.

c) The Social Education Bureau is responsible for Social, youth, women's and audio-visual education.

d) The Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau is responsible for a wide range of activities, including financial and local affairs, kindergarten, elementary, lower, upper secondary, vocational and special education, and for textbooks.

e) The Science and International Affairs Department takes care of science, research, libraries, relations with international agencies and foreign exchanges.

f) The Physical Education Bureau has under its administration sports, physical education, school health and school lunches.

g) The Administrative Bureau has responsibility for private schools, Welfare and Construction.(73)

However, the School Education Law defined the pre-school institutions and formally placed them under the control of the Ministry of Education. Further, the Child Welfare Law passed the same year (1947) defined Hoikuen as welfare facilities and placed them under the control of the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Furthermore, missionaries have played an important role in the development of Japanese pre-schools, American missionaries in particular.(74)

Since there are no specific details about the type of educational administration being implemented at the level of pre-school education institutions according to the available resources, the study will go further to examine the last two steps of Bereday's approach namely juxtaposition and comparison.

A Comparison Perspective:

Until now, this study has already discussed Egyptian, Omani and Japanese pre-schools education in terms of aims, admission regulations, curricula and programmes, teacher preparation, and aspects of educational administration.

The study will draw up a comparison between these aspects in the societies under examination.

Firstly, The Aims of Pre-school Education in Egypt, Oman and Japan:

Despite the cultural differentiations between the Arab countries and Japan, the study reveals that there are more similarities than differences between these three countries concerning the aims of education in general and pre-school education in particular. This is due to the universal awareness of the International and national law and regulations concerning this aspect.

The three societies have always been under the influence of two factors; internally - the influence of traditions and moral values and externally - the influence of some western educational theories.

Secondly, The Admission Regulations of Pre-school Education in Egypt, Oman and Japan:

Both, Egyptian and Japanese societies pay a great attention to this level of education. Therefore, the government in both societies participated in this field, and passed laws, decrees and regulations covering all aspects of this level. At the same time the states allowed the private sectors to participate in this field in order to spread this service over all the society districts. The private sectors are controlling pre-school institutions in Oman for 100%, while in Egypt about 80% and in Japan about 40%. This is due to the socio-economic and political aspects in these societies.

Thirdly, The Curricula and Educational Programmes at Pre-school Education in Egypt, Oman and Japan:

The two countries (Egypt and Japan), stressed on moral education specially at this early level of education. This is due to their holding of traditional and moral values. The Ministry of Education in both countries play the major role of identifying the main aspects of the content and activities, leaving behind some space for the local directorates or schools to manage their institutions according to their resources. This is due to some pressures from the Teachers Unions and similar organizat-

ions and political parties on the governments to release some power to the local authorities. In Oman, according to the available resources, there is no specific curricula or textbooks prepared aspecially for this stage. This is due to to the short time since its reorganization of its educational system, as well as the shortage of financial resources.

Fourthly, The Teacher Preparation for Pre-school in Egypt, Oman and Japan:

All the three countries are aware of the importance of this aspect in order to expand the educational service for all. Therefore, they agreed to unify the resources of preparing teachers for all levels under one shelter, university college in particular. Both Egypt and Japan on gradually basis have put this norms into practice, although some junior college still exist. Therefore, colleges, departments and branches are set up to prepare pre-school teachers in Egypt and Japan. While in Oman, there is no special college or department responsible for preparing such teachers. But, the chance of doing that is available whether within the junior training colleges or at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University.

Fifth and Finally, The Type of Educational Administration Implemented in Pre-school Education Level in Egypt, Oman and Japan:

In the three societies, the Ministries of Education are controlling most of the aspects related to this stage, counselling and supervision in particular. This is very clear in Egypt and Japan, despite the fact that their private sectors participating in this level of education. This is due to the belief in the important function and role played by these institutions on the one hand, and the shortage of resources facing the government, Ministry of Education in particular on the other hand. Therefore, both societies agreed to give the private sectors a big chance to participate in serving their nations. In Oman, despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Education to counsel and supervise the pre-school level, the Ministry of Social Affairs took the lead in this field, financially and administratively.

The Way Forward:

From the 10 principles of early Childhood Education (previously mentioned) and lacking account of prevailing as well as policy pressures, the following procedures are proposed:

1. There are needs to put more emphasis on partnership and reciprocity between adults and children. This requires better understanding of child development and the different areas of knowledge.

2. While recognizing the importance of being child-centred, there is a need to become more family-centred.

3. There is a need for for better and more multi-professional exchanges between workers and services, including voluntary agencies.

4. It is essential to have a better conceptual articulation of what good early childhood education is, and which appropriate assessment and evaluation, is required.

However, the demand for early education in whatever form, is not, of course, simply a question of more families asking for more places. For everyone concerned there are issues of quality to be considered, standards to be set, conditions to be improved and ideals to be striven for.

The study would argue that in the ideal, all parents, including those who do not work outside the home, will be able to place their children in a variety of institutions providing high-quality care and education, full or part-time, with the number of hours required.

Therefore, all families, under any conditions, have everything to gain from access to institutions that offer a variety of services (health, care and education) under one roof, for children from a few months up to the age of 5 or 6, for 50 weeks a year, with extended hours for those in need.

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